

memorandum

DATE:

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: DP-3:X. Ascanio:3-5697

SUBJECT: TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

TO: S. Richardson, Chairman, Federal Technical Capability Panel

Attached is a report documenting an assessment of the status of the Technical Qualification Program (TQP) for the Headquarters staff of Defense Programs (DP). The report notes that the TQP is essentially on hold pending resolution of organization and staffing issues. Efforts are proceeding to develop those aspects of the TQP that deal with determining criteria for participating in the program, roles and responsibilities, and program documentation. However, the DP organization is in a state of flux and this prevents full resumption of our efforts to comply with 93-3. It is noteworthy that, in response to Strategic Alignment Initiative targets and other pressures, the DP Headquarters technical staff has declined from 176 in fiscal year 1996 to 136 today and is projected to further decline. A major initiative to analyze the mission, determine the appropriate staff, and to recruit and allocate personnel to the evolving organization is in progress internally within DP. There is currently a plan to reassign some technical personnel currently stationed in Germantown, Maryland to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Some reassignments would be directed (i.e., involuntary) and I am concerned this will cause a further loss of technical capability because individuals who for personal reasons do not want to relocate will refuse the directed reassignments and seek employment elsewhere. The issue of assuring technical capability is also being examined by the Commission on Maintaining United States Nuclear Weapons Expertise and their report is due in the Spring of 1999. Until these issues are resolved and a stable organization is in place, a sound TQP cannot be fully developed and implemented.

Despite the obstacles, Defense Programs is committed to recruiting, training, and retaining, a technically competent staff. Once the organization and staffing issues have been resolved, we will be able to finalize and implement an appropriate TQP. We believe we understand the flaws of the previous TQP effort and can avoid those pitfalls as we move forward. In particular, a lack of line management ownership and accountability in the development and implementation of the original TQP caused it to fail. Any new effort must and will be based on the principle that assuring technical capability is a key line management responsibility. The cadre that is engaged in our efforts to develop an effective program is committed to

developing the infrastructure that will allow DP to move forward. I expect that the major organization and staffing issues can be resolved and an effective TQP can be put in place during calendar year 1999.

Victor Stello, Jr.
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Safety and Quality
Defense Programs

Attachment

cc:

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DP-3 Official File

Concurrence:

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DP-44

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